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National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to resolution 16/21 of the Human Rights Council*

Russian Federation

I. Methodology

1. The present national report was prepared by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation as part of the third cycle of the universal periodic review on the basis of inputs provided by the federal executive authorities, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation and the Presidential Commissioner for children's rights, and also of consultations with civil society institutions.

2. The report reflects the results of efforts further to strengthen the legal and structural framework for the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the territory of the Russian Federation, and also the results of the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Russian Federation under the voluntary commitments which it entered into in response to the outcome of the presentation of its second national report.

3. At the beginning of February 2018, in the course of preparing the report, consultations were held with non-governmental organizations and were attended by representatives of the Federal Chamber of Lawyers, the bar of Moscow province, public councils under the State authorities, public monitoring commissions, and representatives of non-profit organizations, such as the Russian Union of Taxpayers, the Union of Russian Volunteers, the Association of Lawyers of Russia, the Young Lawyers Council, the Foundation for the Support of Legislative Initiatives and others.

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II. Standards underpinning the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms

A. Constitutional guarantees and international human rights obligations (recommendations Nos. 1, 2, 7–9, 12, 21–23)

4. The Russian Federation is a democratic federal State run by the rule of law, with a republican form of government, and is made up of the territories of its equal constituent entities.

5. Article 2 of the Constitution recognizes human beings and their rights and freedoms as supreme values. It is the obligation of the State to recognize, uphold and protect human and civil rights and freedoms. Section II of the Constitution is devoted to human rights and freedoms and establishes an extensive list of benefits that must be protected. The enumeration in the Constitution of fundamental rights and freedoms should not be interpreted as negating or diminishing other universally recognized human and civil rights and freedoms. Fundamental rights are inalienable, belong to everyone from birth, and are directly enforceable. Rights and freedoms are recognized and guaranteed in accordance with the universally recognized rules and principles of international law.

6. Under the Constitution, the universally recognized rules and principles of international law and the international treaties of the Russian Federation form an integral part of its legal system. If an international agreement of the Russian Federation establishes rules which differ from those provided for by law, the rules of the international treaty shall prevail.

7. The Russian Federation is party to the great majority of the basic international human rights treaties and, with due account for the financial implications and the need to amend domestic legislation and practices, intends in the future gradually to extend the range of its international human rights obligations.

8. In 2013, the Russian Federation ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

9. In 2013, the Russian Federation ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

10. In 2014, the Russian Federation signed the Council of Europe Convention against the manipulation of sports competitions.

11. In 2015, the Russian Federation signed the Council of Europe Convention against trafficking in human organs.

12. In 2017, the Russian Federation ratified the Convention of the Council of Europe on a unified approach to security, protection and care during sports events and in particular at football matches.

13. In 2017, the Russian Federation ratified Protocol No. 15 amending the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

14. In 2017, the Russian Federation ratified the Fourth Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Extradition.

15. In 2017, the Russian Federation acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

16. In 2017, the Russian Federation signed the Second Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters.

17. An interministerial study found that it would be premature for the Russian Federation to accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, a number of provisions which are vague in nature and at variance

with the rules of Russian legislation. At the same time, many of the provisions of the treaty are reflected in sector-specific legislation and actively put into effect.

18. The Russian Federation is not a party to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), because some of its provisions are not aligned with the country's principal approaches to the protection and promotion of traditional moral and the framework for the State family policy of the Russian Federation to the year 2025. At the same time, questions of combating violence against women are given the most careful attention in the Russian Federation. Existing Russian law provides sufficient protection against domestic violence and there is no need for the elaboration of additional legal rules regulating social relations in that area.

B. Human rights legislation and institutions (recommendations Nos. 24, 27–30, 32, 33, 56–61)

19. The Russian authorities are continuing their concerted efforts to improve and strengthen human rights protection arrangements.

20. Human rights protection is assured by the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The President of the Russian Federation is the guarantor of the Constitution and of human and civil rights and freedoms.

21. In response to requests, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation is constantly verifying compliance of the provisions of Russian laws with the Constitution of the Russian Federation, including with reference to international legal standards. In particular, over the reporting period, amendments were made or new bills prepared on the basis of the decisions of the Constitutional Court which related to such issues as the right of foreign nationals and stateless persons suffering from diseases caused by HIV infection, and also those recovering from tuberculosis, to remain and reside in the Russian Federation, the right of convicted prisoners to extended visits, the placement of foreign nationals on the immigration register, and the reduction of cases of the deportation of foreign nationals with well-established social ties in the Russian Federation for minor violations of immigration law.

22. The posts of Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights and Presidential Commissioner for Protection of Entrepreneurial Rights have been established in the Russian Federation. Regional commissioners for human rights, the rights of the child and the rights of entrepreneurs have been appointed and are working in the constituent entities of the Federation. In certain regions, posts have been established for commissioners for the rights of indigenous peoples. The office of the Financial Ombudsman is in operation, and work is under way to enshrine its status and functions in the country's law. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and other coordination bodies, in particular the public councils set up under the federal executive authorities and the heads of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, provide a forum for the engagement by civil society with the public authorities.

23. Extensive work is under way to render the country's criminal legislation more liberal and humane. The list of economic offences where criminal liability is set aside in the event of payment of compensation for harm has been extended; a new form of exoneration from criminal liability has been introduced in the form of the payment of judicial fines; provision has been made for administrative prejudgment as a condition of criminal liability for the repeated non-payment of maintenance for children or parents incapable of work; the threshold of small-scale embezzlement at which administrative liability is incurred has been raised; and small-scale commercial subornation and petty bribery have been identified as indicia of offences attracting lighter sentences.

24. Improvements have been made to the work of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation. Since 2014, the annual reports of the Commissioner have set out targeted recommendations for the public authorities and the implementation of these

recommendations is monitored. In 2016, amendments were introduced governing the procedure for interaction between the public authorities and the Commissioner, including the modalities for the consideration of the annual report on the Commissioner's work.

25. In 2009, the Bureau of the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions, under the Human Rights Council, confirmed the accreditation of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation in accordance with the Paris Principles, with the highest status, A.

26. Between 2013 and 2017, regional commissioners submitted 105 reports on various areas of human rights protection to the State authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

27. The process of establishing offices of human rights commissioners in all the constituent entities of the Russian Federation has been completed. Amendments have been made to the law, to define the principles of the work of these commissioners. In order to coordinate the work of the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, annual congresses are organized of the regional commissioners for children's rights.

28. Thanks to these measures, the work performed by the Office of the Commissioner for Children's Rights has been rendered more effective. In 2016 alone, the Commissioner considered more than 18,000 appeals and conducted more than 20,000 consultations and specialists from the Commissioner's staff participated in more than 80 court proceedings for the protection of children. In 2016, 187 appeals were considered for protection of the rights of Russian children in foreign countries.

29. The Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights reports to the President and it members include representatives of the country's most authoritative non-governmental organizations and independent experts.

30. As part of the current process to reform the system of arbitration (third-party dispute settlement), a council for the improvement of arbitration has been set in place, comprising eminent theoreticians and practitioners in the field of law.

31. Volunteering is on the rise in the Russian Federation. A plan of action has been approved for the development of the volunteer movement, and a consolidated federal Internet platform — Volunteers of Russia — established to publicize the work of volunteers. In 2016, more than 600 students from general education establishments underwent training in the country's national volunteer school. A federal council of experts has been set up for the development of the volunteer movement. By Presidential Decree No. 572 of 27 November 2017, 5 December has been declared Volunteer's Day in the Russian Federation and by Presidential Decree No. 583 of 6 December 2017, 2018 is Volunteer's Year.

32. Active efforts are being made to combat corruption. Since 2013, more than 14,000 offences have been identified relating to enforcement of the law to ensure the correctness of expenditures and disciplinary action taken against more than 2,000 officials. In 2016 and 2017, more than 700 officials were dismissed for corruption-related offences. During the reporting period, more than 141,000 cases involving corruption have been investigated, more than 43,000 of which have resulted in prosecutions. All draft legislation is screened for elements that might be conducive to corruption. A range of activities are organized to raise public awareness of corruption, including a nationwide open day for the reception of citizens and International Anti-Corruption Day. The website of the Office of the Procurator General and other public authorities include specific pages on which members of the public can report any cases of corruption that come to their attention.

33. The provisions under criminal law to combat corruption-related offences have been upgraded: the minimum rate of fines for minor corruption offences has been reduced; new, alternative penalties have been added in the form of punitive deduction of earnings, or fines; a number of additional sanctions may now be imposed at the discretion of the court.

34. In order to fulfil the international obligations that it entered into upon ratification of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions and

the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, the Russian Federation has stiffened the criminal penalties for corruption offences and has established liability for indirect forms of bribery.

35. In 2013, the Governmental Commission for the Coordination of Open Government ratified the principles of openness in the federal executive authorities. In order further to promote openness and transparency in the work of State bodies, in 2014 the road map for the transparency of the federal executive bodies was approved, together with a plan for its implementation. Extensive work is under way on the introduction of a system of easily accessible information on communal services.

C. International cooperation in the field of human rights (recommendations 55, 62–64, 72–74, 230)

36. The Russian Federation is pursuing a sustained policy of strengthening constructive and depoliticized dialogue on topical issues on the international human rights agenda, on the promotion of equitable and mutually respectful cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights, in accordance with the principles of international law, on suppression of the practice of double standards and on preventing the use of human rights issues as a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

37. The Russian Federation attaches the utmost important to the tasks of combating racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, ethnic and religious intolerance and neo-Nazism, of safeguarding historical memory and of countering the falsification of history. Every year, the Russian Federation submits to the General Assembly a draft resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. During its sixty-ninth session, on the initiative of the Russian Federation, the General Assembly adopted its resolution on the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

38. The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council. During the reporting period, resolutions were adopted by the Council on the proposal of the Russian Federation on the protection of the Roma; on the integrity of the judicial system; on human rights and the arbitrary deprivation of nationality; on promoting human rights through sport and the ideals of the Olympic movement; on the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption and fortieth anniversary of the entry into force of the International Covenants on Human Rights; and on the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and twenty-fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

39. On the initiative of the Russian Federation, in March 2015, a conference was held in the Human Rights Council on the protection of Christians in the world, in particular in the Middle East. As part of this event, a joint statement was adopted by 65 States supporting the human rights of Christians and other communities, in particular in the Middle East. On 7 March 2017, on the sidelines of the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, a high-level conference was held on the issue of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence as a condition of interreligious peace and stability, including support for Christians and members of other religions.

40. During the reporting period, the periodic reports of the Russian Federation were considered by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

41. The Russian Federation continues to engage with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. Over the period 2013–2017, the Russian Federation was visited by the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held intersessional meetings away from headquarters.

42. In February 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees visited the Russian Federation.

43. In the framework of cooperation with the regional human rights monitoring mechanisms, the Russian Federation was visited by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights; the head of the Gender Section of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); personal representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism, on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions; the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; the OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; and representatives of the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

44. The Russian Federation promptly responds to requests by the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. Since its completion of the second cycle of the universal periodic review, the Russian Federation has submitted 108 responses to requests relating to both thematic issues and individual communications on alleged human rights violations.

45. Every year since 2006, the Russian Federation has made a voluntary contribution to the budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the amount of $2 million.

46. The Russian Federation is a contributor of international development assistance. During the reporting period, the Russian Federation, together with the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, and a number of other international entities participated in more than 70 international development assistance projects and allocated some $200 million from its budget to those projects.

III. Developments in the field of protection of human rights and freedoms

A. Equality and freedom from discrimination (recommendations 77, 78, 93–97)

47. Under Russian law, all limitations of citizens' rights on social, racial, ethnic, linguistic or religious grounds are prohibited.

48. The law criminalizes discrimination, namely, violation of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of persons and citizens based on their gender, race, nationality, language, origin, property or official status, place of residence, attitude to religion, convictions, or membership of voluntary associations or any social groups, committed by persons in abuse of their official position.

49. The law enforcement agencies respond appropriately to all acts of violence, irrespective of the social and other groups against whose members they are committed. The commission of an offence on the grounds of hatred or enmity towards any social group is deemed to be an aggravating circumstance.

50. In the Russian Federation, it is prohibited to disseminate information that encourages any form of discrimination. During the reporting period, administrative liability has been established for the dissemination of information about job vacancies which include restrictions of a discriminatory nature.

51. The fact that so few alleged cases of discrimination have been referred to the law enforcement authorities (over the period from January 2012 to early July 2017, such

allegations constituted less than 0.2 per cent of the total number of referrals) is evidence that the measures adopted by the Russian Federation have been very effective. Between 2013 and June 2017, only four offences were logged under the rubric of "discrimination".

52. On 8 March 2017, by Order No. 410, the Government approved the national strategy on action for women for the period 2017–2022, which defines the main areas of the State policy on women. The aim of this instrument is to create conditions for the full and equal participation of women in the political, economic, social and cultural domains of social life. Responsibility for implementing the strategy is vested in a coordinating council set up under the Government of the Russian Federation, whose membership includes representatives of both the executive and the legislature and also from civil society.

B. Promotion of tolerance. Countering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (recommendations Nos. 34–42, 80–85, 138, 212)

53. Article 29 of the Constitution prohibits propaganda and agitation designed to inflame social, racial, ethnic or religious hatred and enmity.

54. In the Russian Federation, criminal liability is incurred for offences committed for reasons of political, ideological, racial, ethnic or religious hatred or enmity, or for reasons of hatred or enmity directed against any specific social group. Moreover, those motives are deemed to be aggravating circumstances.

55. In the period 2013–2016, 2,525 criminal cases were opened for incitement to hatred or enmity and for the degradation of human dignity. A total of 1,599 criminal cases heard by the courts ended in convictions.

56. Law enforcement officers undergo regular training in matters relating to the combating of racial discrimination and racial profiling.

57. The law imposes an absolute prohibition on the according by public servants of any preferences to specific social groups. It is now a legal requirement to take into account the specific characteristics of the various ethnic groups and to promote inter-ethnic and interfaith harmony.

58. The law stipulates that the pre-election programmes of candidates, electoral associations, other campaign materials, presentations at public events and on the media should not contain incitements to extremist activities, or endeavour to rationalize or justify extremism.

59. Under the law, extremist activity is defined as: incitement to social, racial, national or religious discord; the advocacy of exclusiveness or the superiority or inferiority of citizens on the grounds of their social, racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic identity or attitude to religion; the propagation and public display of Nazi or analogous paraphernalia or symbols; public calls for the performance of these acts; the large-scale manufacture and distribution of materials of this nature; the organization or preparation of such acts, their financing and instigations to carry them out.

60. One of the basic principles of the State nationalities policy is to prevent and eliminate any form of discrimination on the grounds of social, racial, ethnic, linguistic or religious affiliation. This approach is enshrined in the strategy for a State nationalities policy strategy for the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025, ratified by Presidential Decree No. 1666 of 19 December 2012.

61. The Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, which seeks to tackle the key tasks of the country's nationalities policy, was set up in 2015, together with the Advisory Council on Autonomous Ethnic and Cultural Organizations, which continuously organizes seminars, lectures, discussions, conferences and other events aimed at promoting tolerance and preventing all forms of racial discrimination and xenophobia.

62. In 2016, the Advisory Council carried out a programme designed to strengthen the unity of the Russian nation and to promote the ethnic and cultural development of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

63. Both the Presidential Council on Inter-Ethnic Relations and the Presidential Council on Relations with Religious Associations hold regular meetings.

64. As part of their policy to harmonize interfaith relations, the public authorities maintain an engagement with non-governmental and coordinating bodies working in the field of interreligious and inter-ethnic peace. The Interfaith Council of Russia, jointly founded on 23 December 1998 by the Russian Orthodox Church, the Council of Muftis of Russia, the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia and the European Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Associations of Russia, and the Buddhist Traditional Sangha of Russia, is one of the country's preeminent non-governmental organizations.

65. A range of activities have been carried out to restore historical justice and to foster the political, social and spiritual revival of the Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Italian, Crimean Tatar and German communities that lived in the territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and were subjected to unlawful deportation and political repression on ethnic and other grounds.

66. The curricula of all State and municipal general education establishments at primary and secondary levels include special training courses aimed at developing a culture of mutual respect, promoting traditional cultural, religious and moral values, and inculcating familiarity with the cultural and religious traditions of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

67. All general education schools run a comprehensive course on the foundations of religious cultures and secular ethics.

68. In 2015, a State programme was established on the nurturing of patriotism in citizens of the Russian Federation for the period 2016–2020. One of the main objectives of the programme is to administer civic education and foster legal, cultural and moral values among young people by encouraging the development of tolerance for members of different ethnic groups.

69. In 2013, the Russian Federation joined the No Hate Speech movement, launched by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

70. In 2015, as part of this movement, the first Russian language training course was held on how to counter hate speech through human rights education. In November 2016, a second training course on related topics was organized in the Russian Federation.

71. In 2017, the second national youth forum was held on consolidating the unity of the Russian nation, under the slogan "Russia — a space for dialogue between peoples".

72. A range of activities have been held to promote the ethnic and cultural development of the peoples of the Russian Federation. These include a display of the work by ethnic cultural centres of the small indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation; a cultural forum of ethnic minorities; and an exhibition presenting prize-winning projects of cultural institutions in the country's different regions on ways of strengthening the unity of the Russian nation and fostering the ethnic and cultural development of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

C. Protection of vulnerable groups (Recommendations 31, 43–54, 106–115, 141–143, 213–216)

73. Family law in the Russian Federation is based on the need to strengthen the family, to prevent arbitrary interference in family affairs and to ensure the unimpeded exercise by family members of their rights and their access to legal protection of those rights. The regulation of family relations, in particular, is based on the primacy of the family upbringing of children.

74. In 2012, the national strategy on action for children for the period 2012–2017 was approved, followed, in 2014, by the adoption of the road map for the State family policy in the Russian Federation to the year 2025, through which the strategy is being put into effect. The road map provides for the implementation of measures to ensure the conditions necessary for the establishment and development of the family as an independent and full subject of family policy and for strengthening the institution of the family on the foundations of traditional sociocultural values and measures to enhance the dignity of motherhood and fatherhood. In order further to improve public policies for the protection of children, on 29 May 2017 the President of the Russian Federation signed a decree declaring 2018–2027 as the decade for children.

75. In 2015, the strategy for the development of education for the period up to 2025 was adopted, defining the upbringing of children as a strategic national priority. A road map for the development of children's supplementary education has been approved, with the aim of transforming further education into a force for the integration of open and elective education.

76. In 2015, a road map was approved for the information security of children, to encourage the recognition of children as equal participants in the development of the information society.

77. During the reporting period, the penalties for offences against the sexual inviolability and sexual freedom of minors were stiffened.

78. The law has been supplemented with provisions under which the legal representative of a minor may be barred from proceedings if there is reason to believe that her or his actions are prejudicial to the interests of the child. This rule is particularly important in cases of offences committed against minors by their own relatives.

79. In 2016, the number of children without parental care, registered with the regional databank, was reduced by 51.2 per cent, and that of children in institutions for orphans and children without parental care by 50.3 per cent.

80. Following the accession of the Russian Federation to the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, the country's law has been amended, including in respect of issues relating to judicial applications for the return of a child or the exercise of access rights relating to children on the basis of an international treaty of the Russian Federation.

81. Fulfilment of one of the aspirations of the national strategy for women for the period 2017–2022, namely, the prevention and suppression of the social exclusion of women and violence against women, necessitates measures to upgrade and liberalize the law relating to women held in places of deprivation of liberty for the commission of minor offences, including women with children, and also to improve the legislation on preventing domestic violence.

82. Work is under way to develop a federal bill on the prevention of violence in the family and in the home.

83. Under article 13 of the Family Code, marriage is permitted between citizens who have reached the age of 18. Article 14 of the Family Code prohibits marriage between persons when one of the intending spouses is already in another registered marriage.

84. Reports of any acts of violence against women are reviewed by the law enforcement agencies. Any verified acts of violence shall be punishable in the manner prescribed by law.

85. In 2011, the State programme on access was approved for the period 2011–2020, with the aim of integrating persons with disabilities into society and improving their standard of living. The authorities have been tasked with monitoring the accessibility of facilities and services for persons with disabilities.

86. A range of measures have been elaborated and put into effect, leading to the conduct of activities to promote the employment of persons with disabilities and to ensure their access to vocational training. A plan of measures has been approved to ensure the

accessibility of vocational education for persons with disabilities and those with health impairments for the period 2016–2018.

87. General education, vocational training and professional instruction are delivered to persons with disabilities on the basis of inclusiveness, in accordance with appropriate educational curricula and individual programmes for the habilitation or rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

88. Every year measures are carried out to monitor the conditions available to persons with disabilities to follow secondary vocational courses in vocational educational institutions.

89. A rule has been promulgated pursuant to which children with disabilities living in social services institutions who are orphans or deprived of parental care shall, upon reaching the age of 18, be entitled to accommodation on a priority basis if their individual habilitation or rehabilitation programme makes provision for their self-care and independent living.

90. Provisions have been added to federal law on supplementary benefits for children with disabilities, and on the right of such children to attend training courses funded from the State budget in higher vocational educational establishments.

91. Under the law, one of the parents of a child with disabilities shall be entitled to work part-time and to take leave at a time of their convenience.

92. The tax credit for a child with disabilities has been increased.

93. Extensive work is under way by 61 special libraries for the blind to introduce persons with visual impairments to world and national literary classics. Between 2013 and 2017, the holdings of libraries for the blind have been boosted with some 300,000 new titles, constituting a total of more than 9.5 million books.

94. To ensure support for socially vulnerable categories of citizens, from 1 January 2015 museums under the authority of the Ministry of Culture offer free entrance to children (under the age of 16) and reduced entrance fees for visitors with children.

95. Since 2015, the Abilympics — national championships for persons with disabilities — have been held in the Russian Federation, in which these persons can demonstrate their skills.

96. By order No. 164 of 5 February 2016, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted an action strategy for senior citizens for the period up to 2025, designed to support citizens of retirement age and to enhance their quality of life, including by providing material support, improving their health care and delivering welfare services. At the current time, older persons constitute some 23 per cent of the total population of the country.

D. Right to life, liberty and security of the person Combating human trafficking (recommendations Nos. 101, 103, 104, 116–119, 137, 231)

97. Pursuant to the Constitution of the Russian Constitution, everyone has the right to life.

98. The Russian Federation continues to observe its moratorium on the use of the death penalty as a form of criminal punishment. The ban on the imposition of the death penalty by the courts was confirmed by Presidential Decree No. 724 of 16 May 1996, and also by ruling No. 1344 of 19 November 2009 of the Constitutional Court. This decision effectively concludes the process of enshrining in law the prohibition of this form of punishment in the Russian Federation.

99. Thus, the Russian Federation is in full compliance with the fundamental obligation under the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, even though it has not acceded to the Protocol.

100. The Constitution decrees that no one shall be subjected to torture, violence or other cruel or humiliating treatment or punishment. The commission of such criminal acts shall be punishable by law.

101. The Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation provides that evidence obtained through torture, violence or degrading treatment may not be used as grounds for prosecution and shall be inadmissible.

102. Criminal liability shall be incurred for acts of coercion, including those involving violence, bullying or torture, to give testimony or the use of threats, blackmail or other unlawful acts on the part of the investigator or person conducting an initial inquiry or by any other person with the knowledge or tacit consent of the investigator or person conducting the inquiry.

103. The road map for the development of the penitentiary system of the Russian Federation over the period to 2020 identifies as its key objectives measures to provide more benign detention conditions for persons remanded in custody and those serving sentences of deprivation of liberty and to strengthen safeguards of their rights and legitimate interests.

104. In 2016, a law was adopted that prescribes effective measures to monitor the use of physical force, special devices and weapons against convicts and detainees, and also provides accountability for abuse of authority in breach of the rights of persons held in institutions of the penitentiary system.

105. Checks are carried out of all cases where physical force and special devices are used against convicts and persons held in custody by local authorities.

106. The Russian authorities are continuously adopting effective measures on both national and international scales aimed at combating trafficking in persons, in accordance with the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

107. The notions of "trafficking in children", "exploitation of children", "victim of the trafficking in and (or) exploitation of children" have been introduced in federal law and measures set in place to combat trafficking in and the exploitation of children. These revisions are aimed at ensuring implementation of certain obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of the Council of Europe. Legal liability has now been established for creating conditions for the trafficking in and exploitation of children.

108. A legal and institutional system of State counter-terrorism and extremism has been set in place in the Russian Federation. The country's existing laws to combat terrorism and extremism are consistent with the international obligations of the Russian Federation and do not require radical review.

109. The law imposes additional measures to counter terrorism and to ensure public safety: criminal liability has been introduced for failure to report criminal offences and acts of international terrorism.

110. In 2017, the Russian Federation signed the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, on countering the threat of foreign terrorist fighters.

111. Criminal liability has been established for the provision or collection of funds or financial services intended to fund the organization, preparation and perpetration of offences of an extremist nature, or for the conduct of activities of an extremist association or extremist organization.

112. Criminal liability has been established for participation in the territory of another State in an illegal armed formation, for undergoing training for the purpose of carrying out terrorist activities, and for the formation of a terrorist association or organization and participation in its activities.

113. The Russian law enforcement agencies are taking all the necessary measures to uncover cases of enforced disappearance in the Northern Caucasus. Criminal cases are instituted and prosecuted in response to reports of such disappearances.

E. Administration of justice and the judiciary (recommendations Nos. 120, 121, 123–131)

114. The operation of the judiciary and the administration of justice in the Russian Federation are regulated by the Constitution and federal laws adopted in pursuance of the Constitution. The Russian Federation unswervingly abides by international standards in the administration of justice, in an endeavour to ensure the highest level of protection of human rights and freedoms.

115. Steps are being taken to upgrade the judicial system, to enhance the quality and effectiveness of work involved in the hearing of cases before the courts and the enforcement of judicial decisions, and also to build confidence in the administration of justice by the Russian authorities.

116. In the Russian Federation fundamental importance is attached to the universally recognized principles and norms of international law relating to the openness, disclosure and transparency of the courts, to ensure access to justice for all citizens.

117. The principles of openness, disclosure and transparency in the administration of justice are being put into effect, including through the active use of the Internet.

118. The principle of access to justice is upheld by ensuring that non-parties to proceedings, including representatives of the media, are able to attend proceedings in open court. In order to ensure access to justice, the State online system Pravosudie ("justice") has been created, together with an e-justice system for the federal arbitration courts, and official websites set up for the courts of general jurisdiction, the federal arbitration courts, the college of judges and bodies of the Department of Justice.

119. In 2015, the certification centre of the Pravosudie online platform was duly accredited, intended to provide for the use of an electronic signature in the judicial system. In 2017 alone, more than 26,000 certificates were issued over electronic signatures.

120. Arrangements have been devised whereby information can be shared between the Pravosudie system and the online system of the Federal Bailiff Service.

121. The Pravosudie system is much in demand and highly effective. Every month it is visited, on average, by some 120,000 users. In addition, members of the public make active use of the law courts' Internet sites: over the period 2010–2016, there were more than 3 billion such visits. In 2016 alone, more than 3.5 million documents were transmitted via the online arbitration information service.

122. In 2017, regulations were approved on the procedure for posting copies of judicial rulings on the official websites of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, the ordinary courts and courts of arbitration and the bodies of the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, which are accessible via the Internet.

123. By use of these websites, members of the public are able to submit online applications to the courts.

124. The principle of the independence of judges is enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation and in the country's law.

125. In 2013, a number of legislative amendments were adopted with the aim of strengthening application of the principle of the independence of judges. Under the law, it is prohibited to exert influence on judges in the performance of their duties and a harmonized procedure has been introduced for courts to follow in posting information on the Internet on out-of-court appeals. The list of disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed on judges has been expanded, the indicia of acts of misconduct have been more carefully defined and the grounds and procedure specified for the disciplining of judges. The material and social guarantees of judges have been strengthened.

126. One way in which judicial independence is guaranteed is through the availability of an automated computerized system to choose the composition of the bench in court cases. This approach eliminates the risk of conflicts of interest in allocating the duties of judges.

127. Any person whose rights or freedoms have been significantly infringed has the right to defence in criminal proceedings. The Supreme Court of the Russian Federation has adopted a decision explaining how this right can be exercised.

128. The process of liberalizing the country's criminal procedure law is continuing: regulations have been adopted on the imposition of judicial fines when criminal liability is lifted; the list of property and business-related offences has been extended, with relation to criminal cases which do not entail remand in custody; the practice of expedited initial inquiries has been introduced; a tighter deadline has been set for decisions to lift preventive measures involving remand in custody for persons suffering from severe illnesses that militate against their detention; and use of the jury system has been expanded.

129. Work has been carried out to develop the network of intermediary services, with a view to ensuring restorative justice for the benefit of children, including those who have committed socially dangerous acts but have not yet attained the age of criminal responsibility.

130. In order to uphold the right to judicial protection, a special form of protection has been provided for such children in the form of compensation, the right to trial within a reasonable period or the right to enforcement of a court decision, again within a reasonable period of time. In 2016, new entries were added to the list of legal instruments which, if not enforced within a reasonable period, shall entail the right to compensation.

131. Reforms have been made to the Russian judicial system and system for the administration of justice, pursuant to which, since 2013, the process for the checking and review of judicial decisions has been substantially changed: a harmonized system of appeal proceedings has been established in all courts of second instance, the proceedings in cassational and supervisory bodies have been revised, and a procedure set in place for the judicial review of judgements in the light of newly emerged or altogether new circumstances.

132. Reforms in 2014 led to the abolition of the Supreme Arbitration Court of the Russian Federation and the judicial issues under its purview were transferred to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. This has made possible the more effective judicial oversight of the work of the courts and the consistency of their jurisprudence.

133. The Supreme Court of the Russian Federation periodically reviews the practice of human rights treaty bodies and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council in certain areas of human rights promotion and protection, such as protection against torture, and also exercise of the right to freedom of expression. Its findings are brought to the attention of the judges and staff of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, and are also circulated among the lower courts.

134. In 2015, the Code of Administrative Procedure entered into force. The Code has extended the rights of persons involved in administrative proceedings.

135. The Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation has handed down a number of decisions that extend the availability of judicial remedies: thus, it has deemed unconstitutional the provisions barring challenges to decisions of the Federal Tax Service, which, while not being enforceable legal acts in the formal sense, set out regulatory interpretations of tax legislation which are binding on all tax authorities; it has protected the right of plaintiffs in administrative proceedings to the reimbursement of their legal costs, when administrative cases on certain types of public disputes have been decided in their favour; it has protected the right of citizens participating in elections as voters to challenge the decisions and actions (or omissions) of electoral commissions, relating to the compilation of the voting record; it has made provision for stateless persons who have been placed in special institutions, with a view to the enforcement of administrative penalties involving their forcible deportation from the Russian Federation, to have the ability, when circumstances have come to light demonstrating that such deportation cannot actually be

carried out, to petition the courts to verify the legality and justification for their continued detention in such institutions; it has deemed unconstitutional provisions denying persons the possibility to submit repeated appeals in cassational proceedings when their previous cassational appeals have been rejected by a judge of the appropriate court without consideration; and it has recognized the right to trial by jury for women and men over 65 years of age accused of offences that are punishable by life imprisonment or the death penalty, punishments that are not applicable to individuals in these categories.

136. The Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation has issued a number of pronouncements aimed at ensuring the right to a fair trial, including the minimum necessary respect for confidentiality surrounding the work of defence lawyers when specific investigative actions are being undertaken in relation to those lawyers. An act has been promulgated pursuant to this decision, establishing additional safeguards for lawyers.

137. The provision of free legal assistance to vulnerable categories of citizens is one of the priorities of the domestic policy of the Russian Federation. Efforts are being made to upgrade the legislation of the Russian Federation, with a view to improving the provision of qualified legal assistance free of charge and to making it more accessible.

138. In the constituent entities of the Russian Federation laws have been passed to regulate the provision of free legal assistance and the executive authorities authorized to provide citizens with such free legal assistance have been identified. In 72 regions of the Russian Federation additional guarantees have been established to uphold the right of citizens to receive free legal aid.

139. In 60 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, the public system of free legal aid is administered exclusively by lawyers and, in 8 entities, exclusively by government legal aid offices. In 16 entities, free legal aid is administered jointly by lawyers and legal aid offices.

140. In the non-State system of free legal assistance, such aid is provided by 170 non-governmental free legal aid centres. Legal statutes have been adopted by a number of constituent entities of the Russian Federation governing the procedure for State support for non-profit organizations, including those that provide free legal aid.

141. Since 2018, provision has been made for the introduction of juries in district and garrison military courts.

F. Prison system. Law enforcement agencies (recommendations Nos. 132–136)

142. The Russian authorities are applying an array of measures to enhance the conditions under which persons are held in custody.

143. One of the aims of the road map for the development of the penitentiary system of the Russian Federation over the period up to 2020 is to optimize the accommodation arrangements in detention facilities within the country, including by maintaining the socially beneficial ties of convicts and ensuring the accessibility of correctional facilities for family members.

144. To this end, systematic work is under way to relocate correctional institutions from remote and sparsely populated areas. Since 2011, 80 such facilities have been shut down.

145. In order to reduce the distance between the place where convicts serve their sentences and their places of residence, custodial facilities of a different kind are being set up within such correctional colonies. Since 2015, nine such facilities have been established.

146. The draft special-purpose federal programme for the development of the penitentiary system over the period 2017–2025 includes plans to construct 34 hostels in correctional facilities accommodating 7,120 individuals and the refurbishment of 2 hostels in correctional facilities providing accommodation for 132 individuals and 3 correctional facilities accommodating 1,345 individuals.

147. Additional accommodation is being created for the custody of suspects and accused persons. Under the federal special-purpose programme for the development of the penitentiary system over the period 2007–2016, 14 remand centres have been constructed with accommodation for 5,243 individuals and 34 prison buildings for 9,158 individuals.

148. The draft special-purpose federal programme for the development of the penitentiary system over the period 2017–2025 also envisages the construction of 10 new remand centres with 9,430 places, 6 new prison buildings with 1,800 places, and the refurbishment of one existing prison building with the provision of 100 new places.

149. In order to reduce transit traffic through remand centres, 20 special transit holding centres have been set up within correctional institutions, accommodating 898 individuals.

150. A total of 98 premises have been set up to operate as remand centres.

151. Steps are being taken to renew and expand the pool of special vehicles and rolling stock in order to improve the conditions under which persons remanded in custody are transported and to enhance the security of escort arrangements. Since 2013, special transport vehicles have been manufactured with provision for on-board chemical toilets.

152. Since 2015, railway wagons of a new model have been under construction which, besides having sealed toilet units, are fitted with air-conditioning units, improved lighting and video surveillance devices and water and air disinfection systems, and in which drinking-water is piped directly into the cells holding convicted persons. In 2016, 26 such special wagons were commissioned.

153. The medical care of convicted and remand prisoners is ensured by 136 hospitals specializing in various fields and by medical units or health posts in each facility, 57 secure hospitals for tuberculosis patients, and 9 secure hospitals for persons suffering from drug addiction. Attention is given to the provision of appropriate rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities.

154. In April 2015, amendments were made to the existing criminal enforcement law governing the presence of religious organizations in places of deprivation of liberty, the provision of face-to-face meetings with members of the clergy, and the conduct of religious rites and ceremonies in correctional institutions. Each local agency of the Federal Penal Correction Service now has a post at the assistant director level for work with religious believers.

155. Currently, wide use is made in the Russian Federation of alternative punishments designed to reduce the number of convicted prisoners held in correctional institutions. Non-custodial punishments have been introduced, such as fines, deductions of military service pay; work details; salary deductions; deprivation of the right to hold certain posts or engage in certain activities; restrictions of liberty; and compulsory labour, along with other sanctions, such as deferral of actual custody; suspended sentences; monitoring of compliance by convicted persons with their obligation to undergo treatment for drug addiction and medical and social rehabilitation, and other measures.

156. Since 2012, house arrest has been applied in the Russian Federation as a preventive measure taking the place of remand in custody. Over the period from 2012 to June 2017, this preventive measure has been imposed on 46,800 persons.

157. Under the system of deferring custodial sentences for convicted persons who have been diagnosed as drug addicts, which has been applied since 2012, the sentence is deferred until the end of the treatment and medical (or social) rehabilitation process, but for not longer than five years.

158. Since 1 January 2017, a new type of criminal punishment, compulsory labour, has been imposed as an alternative to imprisonment for the commission of minor or moderate offences or for serious offences when committed as a first offence. Persons sentenced to compulsory labour serve their sentences in special institutions — correctional centres located within the territory of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation in which they previously resided or where they were convicted. Currently, practical measures of an organizational nature are being carried out to establish a system of correctional centres.

Since early 2017, in 401 court cases the convicted parties have been sentenced to compulsory labour.

159. In 2016 there were public oversight commissions operating in 81 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, with a total complement of more than 1,000 members. In 2016, through rotation in 44 regions of the Russian Federation, 642 new members joined these public monitoring commissions. During the reporting period, a procedure has been approved for the submission of public reports on the work of these commissions.

160. Over the period 2012–2016, members of the public oversight commissions made a total of 3,300 visits to institutions of the penitentiary system. Over that period, during their visits to the correctional institutions, the members of the commissions conducted 5,110 one-on-one interviews with convicted prisoners and persons remanded in custody and received more than 975 complaints.

161. As at 1 January 2017, 48,131 women were being held in correctional facilities, including 38,941 convicted felons, held in correctional colonies, medical correctional facilities, medical and preventive treatment facilities, and 9,190 persons held in remand centres and other premises operating as remand centres. Attached to these correctional facilities there are 13 children's homes, housing 540 children.

162. Under the criminal enforcement law of the Russian Federation, there are a number of special clauses governing the serving of sentences by women offenders. Pregnant women prisoners, convicted women with children, convicted persons with disabilities, and convicted persons committed to medical correctional facilities are able to buy foodstuffs and basic necessities using funds available in their personal accounts, without any restriction.

163. Convicted women with children living in children's homes in correctional colonies may be permitted to make brief visits outside their correctional facilities for the purposes of arranging accommodation for their children, while convicted women with minor children with disabilities are entitled every year to one short-term release outside the correctional colony to spend time with their children.

164. Convicted women and other convicted persons serving custodial sentences in correctional colonies or open prisons are allowed to receive parcels, hand-delivered packages and packets without restriction of their number.

165. In 2015, a road map was approved for the managed transition over the period 2016–2021 to arrangements for convicted mothers to live together with their children.

166. In 2016, 26,300 convicted women were involved in the system of labour adaptation. Of these, 24,800 women were employed on a permanent basis in the care and upkeep of their institutions and 1,500 in vocational education and training. In addition, almost 3,500 women underwent on-the-job vocational training.

167. Measures to reduce the number of persons serving custodial sentences are continuing. In 2016, 206,134 individuals were sentenced to deprivation of liberty, representing 27.8 per cent of all convicted persons. In 2015, the number of persons sentenced to deprivation of liberty constituted 28.8 per cent of all those convicted of offences.

168. The number of persons who have received suspended custodial sentences has increased — from 23.3 per cent of all those convicted in 2015 to 25 per cent in 2016.

169. There has been a 1.7 per cent increase in the number of persons who have received fines as their punishment and a 7.6 per cent increase in the number of persons sentenced to perform compulsory work.

G. Civil and political rights, civil society institutions (recommendations 144, 145, 148–150, 152, 154, 156, 157, 159, 160, 164, 166, 167, 170, 173, 175, 177, 185–192)

170. Under article 29 of the Constitution, censorship is prohibited and freedom of thought and speech and freedom of the media are guaranteed.

171. The Russian Federation continues to cooperate actively with the Venice Commission and participates in all of its sessions.

172. All persons are guaranteed freedom of thought and expression and the right to peaceful assembly. Under articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the only restrictions that may be placed on the exercise of these rights and freedoms are those prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health and morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

173. Russian legislation imposes no disproportionate restrictions on the enjoyment of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.

174. The Constitution enshrines the right to assemble peacefully, without weapons, to hold meetings, rallies, demonstrations and marches and to picket. The exercise of this right is an important form of citizens' participation in the management of State affairs.

175. The law lays down rules for the notification of public events. The authorities may only withhold consent to the conduct of a public event if the notification of its conduct has been filed by a person who, in accordance with the law, is not entitled to organize a public event or if the notification indicates as the venue for the event a place where, under the law, the conduct of public events is prohibited.

176. Organizations and members of the public are able to challenge the authorities' decisions in the courts.

177. Work is continuing to improve the law on assemblies, with the adoption of amendments to clarify procedures for notification of public events where the deadline for notification exactly coincides with public holidays.

178. The Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation has issued an appraisal of certain provisions of the Assemblies Act. Amendments have been introduced with a view to defining the civil liability of the organizers of public events, and also the administrative liability of the participants at such public events, and the safeguards of the rights of the organizers and participants of such public events have been strengthened, including with regard to the notification procedure for these events and the placing of limits on the discretionary powers of the authorities to grant approval for them.

179. To date, the approach followed in Russian law has been both comprehensive and integrated and one that protects the freedom of speech and expression. The law prohibits the obstruction of journalists' activities and protects sources of information: A special court order is needed to disclose information sources. The procedure for refuting false information is laid down by law.

180. One way in which support is provided to journalists is through the government prizes awarded to journalists for their investigative work, including with regard to local authorities. Attribution of this award by the State at the highest level serves a safeguard and strong form of support for independent journalism.

181. Offences against journalists and human rights defenders have serious negative implications for the development of society as a whole and undermine efforts to strengthen the rule of law. Accordingly, high priority is accorded to work by the law enforcement authorities to investigate and prevent crime. During the reporting period, 25 offences were recorded under the rubric of "obstruction of the lawful professional activities of journalists", and 29 persons who had committed such offences were brought to justice.

182. Every year grants are awarded from the federal budget for socially important projects in the print and electronic media — for television and radio programmes, documentaries, public service videos and Internet sites of social and educational value.

183. The State is responsible for ensuring the accessibility and affordability for the population of different sources of information — free broadcast radio and television (10 television and 3 radio channels), and print publications.

184. In view of the development of the Internet, the State has taken on the task of establishing a countrywide communications infrastructure to enable broadband Internet access in settlements with a population of 500 and more people.

185. During the reporting period, amendments have been made to the law with a view to restricting access to Internet sites which disseminate information in violation of copyright. Currently, rights holders are entitled to apply to the courts for the imposition of injunctive measures.

186. In 2013, a rule was introduced limiting access to information resources that disseminate information containing incitement to mass riots, extremist activities and participation in mass public activities conducted in violation of the established order.

187. On the basis of a constitutional and legal interpretation by the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, the practice of assigning criminal responsibility for repeated breaches of the law on public events has been brought into line with the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

188. The law governing the activities of non-profit organizations performing the functions of foreign agents has been substantially revised. The notion of "political activity", key to the recognition of non-profit organizations as foreign agents, has been more exactly defined. The definition now includes new attributes which have rendered it more legally precise.

189. Activities in the areas of science, culture, the arts, health care and the provision of medical and preventive treatment, social support and protection, mother and child care, social support for persons with disabilities, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, physical culture and sport, the protection of animal and plant life, and charitable work do not constitute political activities.

190. The obligation of non-profit organizations performing the functions of foreign agents to apply for registration in the appropriate register does not preclude them from receiving financial support from foreign and international organizations, foreign nationals and stateless persons. Nor are these organizations precluded from participating in political activities in the territory of the Russian Federation and they are accordingly not discriminated against by comparison to non-commercial organizations that do not receive foreign funding. A procedure has been formulated for the removal of names from the register of foreign agents.

191. In the Russian Federation, civil society is being vigorously promoted. As at 3 October 2017, there were more than 220,000 non-profit organizations. Over the first six months of 2017, the Government registered more than 11,000 organizations.

192. One of the most important areas of State policy is the provision of financial, material, informational and advisory support to non-profit organizations. Much of this support is provided through grants awarded by the President of the Russian Federation to non-profit organizations involved in the development of civil society institutions and conducting socially significant projects and projects relating to the protection of human and civil rights and freedoms. In 2017, over 7 billion roubles were allocated to these activities from the federal budget, almost double the amount allocated for such purposes in 2016. Programmes to support civil society institutions have also been mounted in a number of federal agencies. Work in this area is being conducted by local authorities.

193. A State prize is awarded every year for outstanding achievements in the field of human rights. In 2017, the winner was the chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group, a regional public organization set up to support implementation of the Helsinki Agreements, Lyudmila Alekseeva.

194. The notion of a non-profit organization — a body which performs public utility services — was introduced in 2017 and a list of such organizations was drawn up. Non-profit organizations may now be provided with financial and material support for periods of at least two years.

195. Following the entry into force in 2012 of amendments to the law on political parties, there has been a visible upsurge in the political activity of citizens of the Russian Federation, manifested in the establishment of new political parties. In all, 69 political parties have been registered and 67 political parties have the right to participate in elections.

196. In 2016, 14 political parties contested the election of deputies to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in its seventh legislative term.

197. The elections at different levels conducted in a single voting day on 10 September 2017 were contested by 42 political parties and 6 civil society associations.

198. Work is continuing on the implementation of programmes for the rehabilitation of victims of political repression. In 2015, a blue-print was approved for a State policy to commemorate the victims of political repression.

H. Economic, social and cultural rights (recommendations Nos. 194–201, 203, 204, 227–229)

199. According to its Constitution, the Russian Federation is a social State.

200. In 2014, the State programme for the social support of citizens was ratified. The programme sets poverty reduction as one of its priority goals.

201. During the reporting period, there have been annual increases in the minimum wage in the Russian Federation. Over the past five years, the minimum wage has increased by a factor of nearly 1.7 and now stands at 72 per cent of the minimum subsistence level of the working population.

202. With effect from 2018, the minimum wage is set at 85 per cent of the actual minimum subsistence level of the working population. In 2019, a permanent system will be set in place to maintain the minimum wage at the level of 100 per cent of the actual minimum subsistence level and it will be prohibited to decrease the minimum wage in the event of the lowering of that subsistence level.

203. Since 2007, upon the birth or adoption of a second (and subsequent) child, a lump-sum maternity payment is granted. The payment is inflation-indexed and has almost doubled over the years since its introduction, now amounting to some $7,800. This programme is scheduled to continue until 2021. In most constituent entities of the Russian Federation, in addition to this federal maternity grant, a regional maternity grant is also awarded, the amount of which is set by the entities themselves. Since 2013, in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, upon the birth of a third or subsequent child, families in need receive a monthly cash payment in an amount equivalent to the subsistence level for children, which is paid until the child reaches the age of 3. At the end of 2017, a law was passed on the payment of a monthly benefit to families with an income of less than one-and-a-half times the subsistence minimum established in the relevant constituent entity of the Russian Federation, payable on the birth of their first child and until the child is one-and-a-half years old.

204. All types of pensions are inflation-indexed and adjusted annually.

205. In January 2017, a one-off cash payment of 5,000 roubles was granted to all pensioners permanently residing in the territory of the Russian Federation.

206. Since 2013, a system has been developed in different regions of the country for the provision of State social assistance on the basis of social contracts.

207. In 2015, the constituent entities of the Russian Federation introduced criteria for the assessment of need and the allocation of social support measures.

208. In 2017, most of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation developed long-term packages of measures designed to boost real incomes and enhance poverty reduction, including measures to improve the earnings of employees in the real economy, to create more productive jobs, to increase income from entrepreneurial activity and others.

209. Since 2014, unemployed citizens have been assigned to attend vocational training and further training courses in occupations which are in demand on the labour market. These citizens are paid an occupational benefit and endeavour to re-enter the job market.

210. In 2015 the Federal Act on the foundations of social services in the Russian Federation came into force. The Act aims to render more effective the operation of the social service system, which is essentially a new system that includes measures to ensure the accessibility and quality of social services for persons with disabilities, for older persons and for other population groups in need of social services.

211. Efforts by the Russian Federation are continuing on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and the promotion of competition. In 2016, for the first time, a strategy has been formulated for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Russian Federation. The strategy is for the period up to 2030. A priority project on small businesses and support for individual entrepreneurship has been approved for the period 2017–2018.

212. The limits on the liability of entrepreneurs have been reviewed. Since 2016, if an administrative offence committed by an entrepreneur is the first such offence and entails no harmful effects, the entrepreneur may be punished with a warning only.

213. A system has been introduced of subjecting complaints alleging violations by entrepreneurs of obligatory requirements to a preliminary screening.

214. The possibility of exemption from certain anti-monopoly prohibitions has been provided for companies whose annual turnover is less than 400 million roubles, and the record-keeping requirements for small enterprises have been simplified.

215. Expanded use is being made of simplified tax systems, since the threshold income levels for its application have been raised, and a range of tax credits have been introduced.

216. Since 2016, a consolidated register of small and medium-sized enterprises has been set in operation, with a view to making government support measures more accessible. It is now no longer necessary to submit documents confirming the status of small or medium-sized enterprises in order for such enterprises to gain access to support programmes.

217. In 2016, 11.1 billion roubles were allocated for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. More than 100,000 entrepreneurs were able to secure support. It is planned to create 20,000 new jobs.

218. The rules for the rental of federal property to businesses have been improved.

219. Procedures for opening accounts in credit institutions have been streamlined, including in the process of the State registration of a legal entity or individual entrepreneur.

220. Over the period 2017–2018, it is planned to provide tax exemption for self-employed citizens.

221. A project has been carried out to establish a network of multifunctional centres for the provision of State and municipal services to businesses.

222. A road map for the development of e-commerce has been prepared.

223. In pursuance of the universally recognized standards and principles of international law, the Russian Federation has a system of compulsory social insurance for employed citizens, which forms an integral component of the social protection of the public and plays an indispensable role in ensuring the stability of their material and social circumstances.

224. During the period 2013–2016, amendments were made to upgrade the law on mandatory social insurance to cover temporary disability and maternity.

225. Laws have been enacted with the aim of upholding the rights of citizens to receive State-guaranteed benefits for temporary inability to work and for pregnancy and childbirth,

and also monthly childcare benefits. The laws are also aimed at ensuring compliance with one of the basic principles of social insurance — the accessibility of social guarantees for beneficiaries, in particular in the event of an enforceable court decision confirming the non-payment of such benefits by the insurer (for example, upon the winding up of its activities or in connection with the lack of funds in the insurer's account in the credit institution and other comparable situations).

226. In 2015, it was decided to extend the period over which the benefit is paid for temporary incapacity to work in connection with the need to care for children with disabilities or for children suffering from certain illnesses when they are receiving medical care in inpatient facilities.

227. Social welfare payments, benefits and compensation are index-linked and adjusted every year. Since 2018, the procedure for the indexation of social welfare payments, benefits and compensation has been laid down in law and is based on the real consumer price growth index for the preceding year.

228. Since 2015, employers have been obliged to make payments into the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation, to be credited to the pension accounts of employees who are foreign nationals. From that same time, foreign workers temporarily resident in the Russian Federation have been able to acquire insurance coverage in the form of benefits for temporary incapacity to work.

229. The Russian Federation is continuing to work on the conclusion of international agreements on cooperation in the area of social security and pensions. Currently, 21 such agreements have been concluded.

230. Under article 40 of the Constitution, all persons have the right to a home. Low-income citizens and citizens of other categories specified in the law who are in need of housing are provided with housing provided free of charge or at an affordable price from State, municipal and other housing funds.

231. No one may be evicted from their home or restricted in their right of occupancy except on the grounds and in the manner prescribed by law.

232. The local authorities maintain a register of citizens entitled to municipal low-rent housing.

233. In the Russian Federation, all persons have the right to necessary medical care, to be provided free of charge in accordance with the programme of State guarantees for the provision of cost-free medical assistance, and also to chargeable medical and other services, including in accordance with voluntary medical insurance schemes.

234. In 2015, an order was promulgated for the organization and implementation of measures to prevent non-communicable diseases and to promote healthy lifestyles in medical institutions.

235. During the reporting period, with the aim of upholding the rights of citizens to protection of their health, a range of measures were adopted, including the adoption of an act on the protection of public health from exposure to tobacco smoke and the consequences of tobacco consumption; the introduction of legal amendments to extend the regulations on the provision of medicines to patients suffering from certain diseases; the upgrading of the medication programme for persons living with HIV; and improved arrangements for the provision of medical care to orphans and children left without parental care.

236. Programmes have been ratified for the development of perinatal centres in the Russian Federation; a medication supply strategy for the Russian public for the period up to 2025 was adopted in 2013; a State programme for the promotion of health-care in the Russian Federation was adopted in 2014; and the road map for the development over the period up to 2020 of early intervention services in the Russian Federation was adopted in 2016.

237. Every year a programme is approved of State guarantees of free medical assistance for citizens, which sets out the obligations of the State to provide the population with free medical care.

238. Since 2013, amendments have been introduced to the country's labour law, with the aim of strengthening the protection of workers. In particular, the law now specifies the period within which employers are obliged, in response to a written request, to inform applicants of the reasons for their refusal to hire them and employees are accorded the right to change the credit institution into which their earnings are paid. The procedure governing the payment of wages has also been laid down with greater precision.

239. In the Russian Federation, an effective policy is applied with regard to labour migration.

240. The employer and the client commissioning the work have the right to recruit and employ foreign workers who are furnished with the necessary permits.

241. During the reporting period, federal law was supplemented with a new rule stipulating that, when an employment contract is being concluded, the foreign worker must be in possession of a voluntary health insurance policy for the duration of the employment contract or the employer must have an agreement with a medical organization on the provision of health care to the employer's foreign workers.

242. During the reporting period, employers have been granted the right to file requests for permission to recruit foreign workers which are valid for an entire year. In addition, the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are now able, during the course of the year, to submit repeated proposals to increase their recruitment needs for the current year and the time frame for the consideration and approval of applications by employers and for the adoption of decisions by interdepartmental commissions has been shortened.

243. A procedure introduced in 2015 has made it possible to reduce to 10–12 weeks the average waiting time for the allocation to employers of quotas for the issuance of work permits and of invitations to enter the country to take up employment.

244. In 2014, safeguards were set in place for the provision of pensions and social welfare to foreign workers during periods of temporary incapacity to work, subject to the mandatory payment on their behalf by their employer of contributions to the Pension Fund and to the Social Insurance Fund of the Russian Federation.

I. Education, including human rights education (recommendations Nos. 205–211)

245. General secondary education is provided free of charge in the Russian Federation, with the option of tuition in the pupils' mother tongue and the study of their languages as separate subjects.

246. In all, 74 different languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation, including 22 languages of small indigenous minorities, are taught as separate subjects. The entire school syllabus is taught in the medium of 24 different languages of the Russian Federation.

247. Public universities provide higher education free of charge on a competitive entry basis.

248. In the Russian Federation, there are 27.9 million people with higher vocational education, 5.4 million with incomplete higher education and 7.1 million with secondary vocational education. The numbers of those with secondary, basic and primary education are, respectively, 21.8 million, 13.0 million and 6.4 million.

249. In 2015, a strategy was ratified for the sustainable development of rural areas of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030, aimed, among other goals, at supporting under-capacity kindergartens and schools in rural areas.

250. Measures to promote awareness of the law are continuing in the Russian Federation. The school system offers a range of opportunities for the fostering of legal awareness

among pupils both in primary and basic schools and in the upper levels of secondary education. Schoolchildren can choose among a range of subjects, such as "Fundamentals of law", "Constitutional law", "Your rights in daily life", and attention is given to such topics as the citizenship responsibilities of teenagers, civil and political rights, and social, economic and cultural rights. The curricula in the areas of social studies, humanities and economics include a stand-alone course in law. The general history course gives particular emphasis to belief-based and law-based approaches to the notion of human rights. Schools also offer extracurricular and after-school activities related to the teaching of law, including the arrangement of visits with the law enforcement authorities.

251. The Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation is involved in the work of preparing general education syllabuses dealing with the exercise and protection of human rights and freedoms, the publication of textbooks and guidelines, the operation of legal clinics, and also the conduct of scientific research work and projects and the promotion of master's degree programmes designed to prepare legal specialists in the field of human rights protection.

252. A master's programme on the international protection of human rights is being run with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and guidance by the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. In the course of setting up this master's programme, an inter-university human rights resource centre has been established under the Department of International Law at the Peoples' Friendship University of the Russian Federation.

253. The Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation is actively cooperating with universities, including through the signing of memorandums of understanding for the exchange of information materials, the conduct of joint scientific and practical and awareness-raising activities, including on international issues, and the organization of internships in the Office of the Commissioner.

254. Every year, on 20 November, the country observes the national day of legal assistance for children. The most important elements of this day are activities relating to the provision of legal aid to orphans, their guardians and foster families and to children with disabilities and their parents, and measures to raise awareness of their rights. The activities are carried out by organizing counselling centres in different venues; by setting up hotlines; and by arranging legal lectures and lessons and brain games, including for residents of children's homes and juvenile detention facilities.

255. Thematic modules on reproductive health and sex education have been prepared in an accessible form for educational institutions and may be used by them in their work.

J. Rights of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples (recommendations Nos. 217–222, 224)

256. The Russian Federation has a population of more than 190 peoples and ethnic groups, who, under Russian law, have equal rights to maintain and develop their language, culture and traditions. At the same time, the State provides additional support for the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, and also for other ethnic minorities.

257. In view of the vulnerability of their traditional lifestyles and habitats, and the small numbers of each of these indigenous peoples, the law has identified a substantial list of preferences and benefits available to them relating to the use of natural resources and land, and also social support measures.

258. The Constitution guarantees protection of the rights of small indigenous minorities and recognizes the requirement for measures to meet the ethnocultural needs of these citizens. Under article 43 of the Constitution, access is guaranteed to, among other benefits, free basic general education in State and municipal educational institutions and at enterprises. Russian citizens have the right freely to choose their language of education.

259. In general educational establishments located in the republics of the Russian Federation, instruction and learning may be conducted in the official languages of those republics. Currently, the languages of 34 different ethnic groups are official languages in the republics of the Russian Federation and may be used in those constituent entities on a par with the Russian language.

260. The State assists in the organization of various forms of education in the mother tongue of many of the peoples of the Russian Federation in accordance with the needs and interests of groups of citizens.

261. Steps are being taken to enable certain categories of children to adapt to the educational syllabus, in particular the children of migrants and Roma and children who have fallen behind because of illness. With a view to the more successful social integration of Roma children in the school environment, a basic Russian language programme has been prepared for Roma children who do not speak the language and also a textbook of the Roma language for primary grades.

262. Regional special-purpose programmes have been organized for the development of indigenous minorities in those constituent entities of the Russian Federation where small indigenous minorities live, such as the indigenous minorities of the North.

263. In 2016, a plan of measures was ratified for the implementation over the period 2016–2025 of the policy framework for the sustainable development of the small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation.

264. In the constituent entities of the Russian Federation where children from small minorities live and go to school, study guides, training manuals, guidance and learning materials, literary works and periodicals are published in native languages, other than Russian. Thus, in the Komi Republic over the years 2015 and 2016, 17 general education Komi language textbooks were published and a further 12 prepared for publication. Four online training manuals on the Komi language were issued.

265. Educational support is provided in a manner that accommodates the nomadic life of indigenous peoples. For example, in the 2016/17 academic year, in the territory of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area alone, educational services were provided in nomadic encampments by nine kindergartens, one nursery school and three schools. Teaching is administered by 24 "nomadic" teachers. In all, 106 children are receiving pre-school education and 77 are enrolled in general primary classes.

266. Federal law sets out special guarantees for the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation; these include: simplified procedures for access to and the use of living resources; specific rules for forest management and the use of timber in areas where they traditionally reside; and public support for communities set up as non-profit organizations for the protection of their native habitat and for the preservation and promotion of their traditional lifestyles, livelihoods, trades and culture.

267. At the current time, a multilingual portal is being set up to provide interactive education in the medium of Russian as part of the project to promote Russian-language education. A number of leading educational organizations have organized initial large-scale open educational courses, which have attracted more than 10,000 students. These students are now able to follow courses on leading global open learning sites and to gain credits for study completed on these open-access courses as part of their traditional educational curriculum.